

Message Text

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CINCPAC HONLULU HI

C O N F I D E N T I A L COLOMBO 3272

E.O. 11652 GDS

TAGS: PFOR, CE, IN

SUBJ: INDIAN MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS VISITS SRI LANKA

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

1. Y.B. CHAVAN, RECENTLY NAMED INDIA'S MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS, PAID THREE-DAY OFFICIAL VISIT TO SRI LANKA NOVEMBER 18 TO 20. MUCH WAS MADE OF FACT THAT THIS WAS CHAVAN'S FIRST VISIT OUTSIDE INDIA SINCE ASSUMING NEW ROLE, COMPLIMENT WHICH HAS OBVIOUSLY PLEASED AND FLATTERED HIS HOSTS. CHAVAN CALLED ON PRESIDENT GOPALLAWA, MET WITH AND WAS GIVEN OFFICIAL DINNER BY PRIME MINISTER BANDARANAIKE, CALLED ON MOST OF KEY CABINET MINISTERS, WAS GUEST AT LUNCHEON GIVEN BY INDIAN BANKS OPERATING HERE, AND DID SOME SIGHT-SEEING.

2. PRESS RELEASE ISSUED BY MINISTRY OF DEFENCE AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS (MDFA) AT END OF VISIT SAID
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THAT TALKS BETWEEN CHAVAN AND MRS. BANDARANAIKE "WERE

HELD IN AN EXTREMELY CORDIAL AND FRIENDLY ATMOSPHERE, AND DISCLOSED A CLOSE IDENTITY OF VIEWS ON MAJOR INTERNATIONAL MATTERS AND BILATERAL MATTERS." AMONG TOPICS DISCUSSED, ACCORDING TO PRESS RELEASE, WERE: (A) SIRIMA-SHASTRI PACT FOR REPATRIATION OF TAMILS; (B) INDIAN OCEAN PEACE ZONE PROPOSAL; (C) FORTHCOMING NON-ALIGNED SUMMIT CONFERENCE IN COLOMBO; (D) EXPANSION OF TRADE; AND (E) INTENSIFICATION OF ECONOMIC COOPERATION.

3. HONEYMOON ATMOSPHERE OF CHAVAN'S VISIT REFLECTS RESOLUTION OF OUTSTANDING POLITICAL ISSUES BETWEEN TWO COUNTRIES DURING PAST YEAR WHICH HAS CREATED SALUBRIOUS CLIMATE FOR BILATERAL RELATIONS. LITTLE OF SUBSTANCE APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN EXPECTED FROM VISIT. ON ECONOMIC SIDE, CHAVAN DID SAY IN RADIO INTERVIEW THAT THERE IS GREAT DEAL OF GROUND TO COVER IN FIELDS OF TRADE AND ECONOMIC COOPERATION, BUT HE ALSO NOTED EARNEST EFFORT IS BEING MADE IN THIS DIRECTION. INDIANS HAVE BEEN HANDLING RELATIONS WITH CEYLONSE QUITE ADROITLY IN RECENT TIMES, THEREBY BLUNTING TRADITIONAL CEYLONSE HOSTILITY. AS RESULT, CEYLONSE HAVE REMAINED MUTE ON ISSUES THAT MIGHT IN FACT WORRY THEM OR OTHERWISE PRESENT OPPORTUNITY TO CRITICIZE INDIA: EVENTS IN SIKKIM, INDIA'S NUCLEAR EXPLOSION, AND PAKISTAN'S SOUTH ASIA NUCLEAR-FREE ZONE PROPOSAL. AT SAME TIME, INDIA HAS IGNORED DOMESTIC DEMANDS TO SUPPORT TAMIL SEPARATISTS IN NORTHERN SRI LANKA AND HAS LOWERED PROFILE AS PATRON OF INDIAN TAMILS OF PLANTRHN# SECTOR KPE. NEW ATMOSPHERE HAS REDUCED TENSIONS ON BOTH SIDES, WHICH SHOULD HELP PROMOTE STABILITY IN AREA, IN TURN SERVING US INTERESTS. TO BE WATCHED AS RESULT THESE IMPROVED RELATIONS, HOWEVER, IS ANY INDIAN EFFORT TO CONVINCE CEYLONSE TO PLAY MORE ACTIVE ROLE IN OPPOSING US PLANS TO EXPAND DIEGO GARCIA.

BYRNE

NOTE BY OC/T: (#)AS RECEIVED.
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